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REVIEWS

TRAINING IN POETRY

An anthology is ordinarily a confession of taste. Plucking the flowers of poesy is now, in these days of literature teaching, more than a matter of taste; it is one of responsibility. "I offer you these poems, now learn something of poetry from them," is the editor's charge to the student. In other and less pedagogic times, the posy-ring was presented to whoever wished it, in an informal take-or-leave fashion. It was thus that the fantastical garlands of the sixteenth century were compiled. Their titles are in themselves poetical curiosities. They were and are still for the adult student. When Professor Palgrave conceived the more serious purpose of indicating movements in English poetry in *The Golden Treasury*, he was but following the precedent of the Byzantine professor in Dante's time whose Greek anthology is our historic source of training in Greek literature. Once the training idea enters into the selection of poetry, it is but natural that the what and the wherefore of every new offering should be considered. The compilation by Professor Seward¹ invites some yeas and nays as to choice of pieces and to principle of classification.

The narrative poems are in five groups and range from the folk-ballad to Pope's "Rape of the Lock." The poems in each group offer scarcely a question as to their propriety; they are the orthodox offering to the young, with the exception of Wordsworth's "Laodamia" and the "Rape of the Lock." If the stress is upon his style of narrative rather than upon the poet's experiment in narrative style, the "Laodamia" is the least Wordsworthian of all the narrative poems of Wordsworth; unless the "Rape of the Lock" is positively needed to illustrate a point in the appended discussion on a lack of nature-feeling in Pope's age, the poem is a questionable choice. Tennyson's achievement in narrative poetry is remarkable, and this fine fooling of Pope could be dispensed with for the beauty of one of the Idylls; if restraint is the quality to be demonstrated in "Laodamia," let William Morris' "Atalanta's Race" be the choice, and let Wordsworth be represented by what is really his genius in narrative, a free simplicity, not an affected one.

¹ *Narrative and Lyric Poems for Students*. By S. S. SEWARD, JR. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1909.

No one will quarrel with a division of narrative poems into old and new ballads, short and long poems; but when lyrical poems are labeled "Joy in Life," "On the World of Nature," "Courtship and Love," "Bereavement and Death," and scarcely a poem in any group but could be shifted elsewhere, this kind of classifying breaks down. "It Was a Lover and His Lass" is an out-and-out love lyric; it is not among the love poems. "Elegy in a Country Churchyard" is classed as a poem of grief; it is certainly very abstract grief. "The Chambered Nautilus" is called a nature-poem. There is more didacticism than nature in it. Almost the entire group of nature-poems is subjective in conception. Professor Seward ignored the Elizabethans in this group; he has nothing from Blake; hence the sheer loveliness of nature, except in the few pieces of Shelley and Wordsworth, is not enforced. Herrick's sinister little "Counsel to Girls" is called joyous and the only joyous poem Herrick ever wrote, "Corinna's Maying," is not given. "The Last Leaf of Holmes" is called playful in mood. I have never known a student who did not call it sad. Perhaps students feel more kindly toward old age than Holmes did.

These illustrations are sufficient to point the danger of over-refinement in classification. Lyrical poetry in spite of its enormous diversity is simply differentiated. Poets eternally sing of nature, of love, of the philosophy of life. They frequently blend the three in one poem. If the student recognizes the source of the poet's inspiration, he is on the way to the poet's method of treating his theme, and is at liberty to name it for himself. Professor Seward forces the generalization before the discovery, a method which inhibits both.

So far as his collection recognizes contemporary poets, and includes American as well as English, it deserves praise. In that he does away with any idea of the historical development of poetry, yet attempts to individualize poets, he is delightfully inconsistent. Ridding the student of one difficulty in learning poetry and retaining it in another form is not an advance in this type of literature teaching. A free range among a large number of poems of all types, with no indexing other than the kind a student may arrive at for himself, is the best introduction to poetry. A slow leading to technique must accompany this free reading. The anthology is yet to be compiled which shows, except in snatches, the subtle relation between mood, meter, phrasing; in a word that which makes poetry poetry—its style. Coventry Patmore more than fifty years ago had the right idea of an anthology for young people—a varied garden of beauty in which they roamed at will. Professor

Seward's notice that his poems are "for students" makes one wonder what period of student life he means. His grouping is too rigid for very young students, and his selection is not varied enough for older students.

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BOOK NOTICES

Business English. By EDWIN HERBERT LEWIS. Chicago: LaSalle Extension University, 1911. Pp. 11+287.

An Elementary English Grammar. By ALMA BLOUNT and CLARK S. NORTHUP. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1911. Pp. ix+264.

English Readings for Schools. General Editor, WILBUR LUCIUS CROSS. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1911.

Arnold's *Sohrab and Rustum* and *Other Poems*, by Walter S. Hinchman. Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, by J. H. Gardiner. Burke's *Speech on Conciliation*, by Daniel V. Thomas. Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, by Wilbur L. Cross. George Eliot's *Silas Marner*, by Ellen E. Garrigues. Irving's *Sketch Book*, by Arthur Willis Leonard. Macaulay's *Lord Clive* and *Warren Hastings*, by Frederick E. Pierce and Samuel Thurber, Jr. Poems of Robert Browning, by Charles W. Hodell. Poems of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats, by James Weber Linn. Scott's *Ivanhoe*, by Alfred A. May. Scott's *Lady of the Lake*, by Alfred M. Hitchcock. Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, by John W. Cunliffe and George Roy Elliott. Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, by Ashley H. Thorndike. Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, by Felix E. Schelling. Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, by Frederick Erastus Pierce. Stevenson's *Inland Voyage*, by Edwin Mims. Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, by Stuart P. Sherman. Washington's *Farewell Address*, and Webster's *First Bunker Hill Oration*, by William Edward Simonds.

English Problems. A series of papers for secondary teachers. General Editor, CHARLES SWAIN THOMAS. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1911.

Distributed gratis. The numbers so far issued are: 1. *Economy in the Teaching of English Literature*, by the Editor. 2. *College-Entrance Requirements in English and the High-School Course*, by James Fleming Hosic.

A Chevalier of Old France. The Song of Roland, translated from the Old French. By JOHN HARRINGTON COX. Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1911. Illustrated. \$1.25.

A Knight of Arthur's Court. The Tale of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. By JOHN HARRINGTON COX. Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1911. Illustrated. \$1.25.

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